(a) whether Government is aware that the standard of cleanliness and maintenance of coaches and the quality of water supplied in the trains is deteriorating day by day;

(b) whether it is also a fact that the level of commitment of railway employees is decreasing resulting in late running of trains as well as increase in the number of accidents; and

(c) if so, the steps being taken by Government to improve the standard of maintenance and cleanliness in trains and to run the trains on time?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) No, Sir. Indian Railways have always endeavoured to improve upon the standards of maintenance, cleanliness and hygiene in coaches and ensure good quality of the water supplied in the coaches.

(b) and (c) No, Sir. Late running of trains is due to various reasons like miscreant activities, alarm chain pulling, natural calamities, damage to track due to breaches, law and order problems, bad weather, cattle run over, equipment failures and electricity grid failure. Several steps *viz.* monitoring of trains, punctuality drive, improvement in time tabling, upgradation of technology of track, rolling stock and signaling are being taken by Railways to run the trains on time.

Safety is the prime concern of Indian Railways. All possible steps are undertaken on a continuing basis to prevent accidents which include timely replacement of over-aged assets, signaling and interlocking systems, safety drives, publicity campaigns and inspections at regular intervals to monitor and educate staff for observance of safe practices. As a result, there has been a declining trend in the number of train accident.

Following schemes have been launched for improving the standards of cleanliness in trains:—

— Intensive mechanized cleaning of rakes in the coaching depots.

— On Board House Keeping Services (OBHS) in all Rajdhani/Shatabdi and important Mail/Express trains.

— Clean Train Station Scheme at identified stations.

— Comprehensive pest and rodent control arrangements.

Gauge conversion in Western Zone

2395. SHRI PRAVEEN RASHTRAPAL: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) how many Gauge Conversion Demands are pending in Western Zone as on 31st March, 2009;

(b) what is the calendar of works on hand as on today;

(c) how many from above pertains to the State of Gujarat; and

(d) what is the progress by Rail Vikas Nigam Ltd. in various projects of gauge conversion?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) As per available records, requests have been received from Government of Gujarat and Rajasthan some time back containing some of the gauge conversion projects which pertain to Western Railway. The details and status of the pending proposals where gauge conversion has not yet been taken up is as under:—

Sl. No.	Proposal	Status
1.	Ahmedabad-Mehsana-Taranga-Ambaji	Survey for gauge conversion of Mehsana-Taranga hill with extension to Ambaji has been completed and proposal could not be considered due to its un-remunerative nature.
2.	Ahmedabad-Botad-Bhavnagar and Dhasa-Jetalsar	Proposal for Ahmedabad-Botad and Dhasa-Jetalsar conversion was processed for "In Principle" approval of Planning Commission, who desired that the gauge conversion of the section may be deferred for the present as the projected traffic do not justify immediate conversion. Botad-Bhavnagar is already a broad gauge line.
3.	Narrow gauge railway lines under jurisdiction of Vadodara Railway Division.	In Vadodara Division, gauge conversion of Bharuch-Samni-Dahej, Pratapnagar-Chhota Udepur, Ankaleshwar-Rajpipla has been taken up.
4.	Ahmedabad-Khedbrahma-Ambaj	The work on Ahmedabad-Himmatnagar has already been taken up as part of Ahmedabad-Udaipur conversion. The survey for Himmatnagar-Khedbrahma with extension to Abu Road has been taken up.

(b) and (c) The ongoing gauge conversion projects on Western Railway are as under:—

i. Bhuj-Naliya with extension to Vayor.

ii. Ankleshwar-Rajpipla.

iii. Ratlam-Mhow-Khandwa-Akola.

iv. Ahmedabad-Himmatnagar-Udaipur.

v. Surendranagar-Dhrangadhara of Surendranagar-Bhavnagar-Dhola-Mahuva with extension to Pipavav gauge conversion project.

vi. Wansjalia-Jetalsar of Rajkot-Veraval, Wansjalia-Jetalsar with extension of Veraval Somnath gauge conversion project.

vii. Pratapnagar-Chhota Udepur

viii. Bhildi-Viramgam

Except Ratlam-Mhow-Khandwa-Akola gauge conversion project, all the above projects fall partly/fully in Gujarat state

(d) The details and status of the various ongoing gauge conversion projects which arc being executed by Rail Vikash Nigam Ltd. is as under:—

Sl. No.	Name of Project	Status
1.	Bhildi-Samdhari	Earthwork, bridge works, ballast etc., have been taken up. Overall physical progress is 85%. Targeted for completion during 2009-10.
2.	Thanjavur-Villupuram	Villupuram-Cuddalore and Thanjavur-Sirkazhi sections (138 km) completed. Overall physical progress is 90%. Targeted for completion during 2009-10.
3.	Ajmer-Phulera-Ringus-Rewari	Phulera-Ringus-Riwari (215 km) section completed. Work on balance portion of Phulera-Ajmer has been taken up. Targeted for completion during 2009-10.
4.	Bharuch-Samni-Dahej	The project is being executed by Special Purpose Vehicle. Share Holder Agreement (SHA) has been signed. Conversion work taken up.

Development and upgradation in North Gujarat

2396. SHRI PRAVEEN RASHTRAPAL: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) why development and upgradation in North Gujarat area is neglected by her Ministry;

(b) whether the Ministry would look into various demands from Radhampur, Patan and Palampur area concerning more broad gauge railway connections, extension of trains from Ahmedabad and Gauge conversion between Bhiladi-Samdari and Patan-Bhiladi railway lines; and

(c) if so, by when, alongwith the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) to (c) No, Sir. Equitable and balanced regional development is a policy of this Ministry. A request has been received from the State Government of Gujarat containing some of the railway projects of North Gujarat. The details are as under:—

(1) Harij-Mahsana-Radhanpur. Survey completed and proposed new line not taken up.

(2) Gauge conversion of Mahsana-Taranga Hill with extension to Ambaji: Survey completed and proposal not taken up.

(3) Gauge conversion between Himmatnagar-Khedbrahma with extension to Ambaji: Survey taken up for gauge conversion between Himmatnagar-Khedbrahma with extension to Abu Road.